

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1935 Session of
2001

INTRODUCED BY ARGALL, FREEMAN, KENNEY, PETRONE, M. BAKER,
CAPPELLI, GEIST, HERMAN, HENNESSEY, PIPPY, SAYLOR, SCHRODER,
STEELMAN, MCILHATTAN, ZUG, LEWIS, HUTCHINSON, HARPER,
M. WRIGHT AND SATHER, SEPTEMBER 26, 2001

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON URBAN AFFAIRS, SEPTEMBER 26, 2001

AN ACT

1 Providing for a commercial downtown enhancement program to be
2 administered by the Department of Community and Economic
3 Development; and making an appropriation.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Main Street
8 Act.

9 Section 2. Legislative findings and purpose.

10 (a) Findings.--The General Assembly finds as follows:

11 (1) The viability and desirability of established
12 commercial downtowns in this Commonwealth's urban areas have
13 been in a state of decline for more than 50 years.

14 (2) Suburban sprawl has lured businesses away from
15 established commercial downtowns.

16 (3) Suburban sprawl has led to great losses of valuable
17 farmland and open space throughout this Commonwealth.

1 (4) Many established commercial downtowns suffer from
2 deteriorating infrastructures and structural decline.

3 (5) Many established commercial downtowns suffer from
4 the adverse effects of criminal activity.

5 (b) Purpose.--The purpose of this act is to establish the
6 program to enhance the desirability and viability of established
7 commercial downtowns through a comprehensive plan to do all of
8 the following:

9 (1) Address the issues of infrastructure and structural
10 decline in established commercial downtowns.

11 (2) Address the adverse effects of criminal activity in
12 established commercial downtowns.

13 (3) Improve the public image of established commercial
14 downtowns.

15 (4) Enhance the economic and social aspects of operating
16 a business in an established commercial downtown.

17 (5) Complement adjacent residential corridors.

18 Section 3. Definitions.

19 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
20 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
21 context clearly indicates otherwise:

22 "Department." The Department of Community and Economic
23 Development of the Commonwealth.

24 "Established commercial downtown." A defined geographic area
25 which has:

26 (1) historically consisted of buildings and structures
27 constituting the community core; and

28 (2) existed as a commercial downtown for at least 40
29 years.

30 "Main Street area." The established commercial downtown of a

1 municipality.

2 "Manager." A full-time, professional downtown coordinator.

3 "Municipality." A city, borough, township, county or home
4 rule municipality.

5 "Program." The Main Street Program established in section 4.
6 Section 4. Program.

7 (a) Establishment.--There is established a Main Street
8 Program. The department shall administer the program to help a
9 community's downtown economic development effort through the
10 establishment of a local organization dedicated to downtown
11 revitalization and management of downtown revitalization.

12 (b) Guidelines.--The program shall, at a minimum, include
13 the following components:

14 (1) Five-year maximum Commonwealth financial assistance.

15 (2) Basic grants for administrative costs associated
16 with the hiring of a manager.

17 (3) Basic grants for infrastructure and structural
18 improvements, including streets, street lights, trees,
19 housing facades and sidewalks or other pedestrian-oriented
20 features.

21 (4) Plans for marketing and promoting the established
22 commercial downtown within the Main Street area.

23 (5) Plans to leverage additional private and public
24 investment in the Main Street area.

25 (6) Plans to address social or economic concerns within
26 the Main Street area.

27 (7) Plans, to the greatest extent possible, to achieve
28 consistency with existing revitalization efforts.

29 (8) An assessment of the potential need for the
30 following components:

(i) The establishment of a downtown improvement district as defined in the act of December 20, 2000 (P.L.949, No.130), known as the Neighborhood Improvement District Act.

(ii) A review of local comprehensive plans and zoning and other land use ordinances to foster the viability of the Main Street area.

(c) Eligibility.--Municipalities or their designated agencies must meet the following criteria to participate in the program:

(1) Have a clearly defined established commercial downtown in need of a manager.

(2) Have demonstrated support by local residents, merchants and government officials.

(3) Have ability to provide up to a 50% match for department grants in financial or in-kind support from other public or private sources based upon departmental guidelines. The department may waive matching requirements if it determines that the requirements would constitute an unusual hardship upon the municipality or its designated agency.

(d) Limits.--The department shall establish limits on the amount of money available to each applicant so as to distribute the available funds as fairly as possible throughout this Commonwealth.

Section 29. Appropriation.

The sum of \$2,500,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Department of Community and Economic Development for the fiscal year July 1, 2001, to June 30, 2002, to carry out the provisions of this act.

Section 30. Effective date.

1 This act shall take effect immediately.